C8950-2
TLE1 20814 069100 3DG
*C 9007 958 BCG
JEANNE LONG **
ACQ EDITOR **
CONGRESSIONAL INFORMATION SV
420 EAST WEST HWY 800
BETHESDA MD 20814

RV BUSINESS

MAY 25, 1990

FOLD-DOWNS: 1990 will be a pivotal year for folding camping trailers, promising both the chance of a sales recovery and the first test of newcomer Fleetwood Folding Trailers. See feature on page 28.

RV Excise Tax Urged by National Parks Group

A broad-based federal excise tax on recreational and sports equipment has been proposed to Congress as a way to raise revenue to meet the cost of running public recreation areas.

In testimony before the House Ways and Means Committee, Barry Tindall, speaking for the National Parks and Recreation Association (NPRA), urged the imposition of a 1% tax on virtually all recreational goods and services. Tindall claimed that the tax is necessary to bridge the ever-widening gap between the actual costs of operating recreational areas and the revenue provided by user fees and other sources of income. NPRA represents some 21,000 employees of public recreation agencies, notably policy makers and managers.

As presently proposed, the tax would be applied uniformly to all recreation-related purchases regardless of cost.

Manufacturers of RVs have been among those concerned about the proposal, noting that a 1% surcharge on the price of tennis balls is a matter of pennies, but that an excise tax on a fully-equipped RV might add

continued on page 14

Accord Reached on California Special RV-Driver's Licensing

In what is being hailed as an important step for the RV industry, an agreement has been reached by the RV community and state officials on provisions of California's special driver's licensing proposals.

On April 23, representatives of the Good Sam Club℠, RVIA and California Assemblyman Richard Katz, who is chairman of the Assembly Transportation Committee overseeing the issue, came up with the following program:

• The minimum gross vehicle weight ratings (gvwr) of towables requiring special licensing have been raised to 10,000 pounds for a travel trailer and 15,000 pounds for a fifth-wheel. Only drivers of towable vehicles above those weight ratings will have to get a special driver's license with requirements be-

continued on page 12

7 Mallard Designs Small Class A For U.S., Europe

7 Top Converters Report Upturn In Spring Sales

7 Industry Fights Calif. Limit on Registration Info

8 NHTSA Issues Micro Warning, Plans Hearing

8 Leisure Odyssey Unveils Class A On Isuzu Chassis

9 Dealer-Show Sales Top State Agendas

9 Rockwood Offers Regent 'Minibus'

9 Ford to Add Chassis Sizes

10 Custom-Bus Leaders Expect Bigger Shares

11 NHTSA Cites Problem With Van Seat-Belts

13 Prevost Debuts New High-Line Bus Shell

RV BUSINESS

VOLUME 41, NUMBER 4 | MAY 25, 1990 | TWO DOLLARS

17

34

COVER PHOTO COURTESY OF JAYCO INC.

NEWS AND TRENDS

Industry News ____ 7
RV People ____ 17
At Retail ____ 21
RVIA Shipments ____ 24
Blue Chip Consensus ____ 26

FEATURES

Fold-downs Seek '90 Rebound ____ 28
1990 may turn out to be a pivotal year for folding camping trailers, as the starting point for sales recovery and as the first test of newcomer Fleetwood Enterprises, which siezed a third of the market with its 1989 acquisition of Coleman's fold-down operations.

RV Financing ____ 34
Although retail-financing rates and availability seem to be supporting RV sales, dealers warn that longer loan maturities and manufacturer-sponsored buy-downs may be siphoning off tomorrow's buyers to pump up today's market.

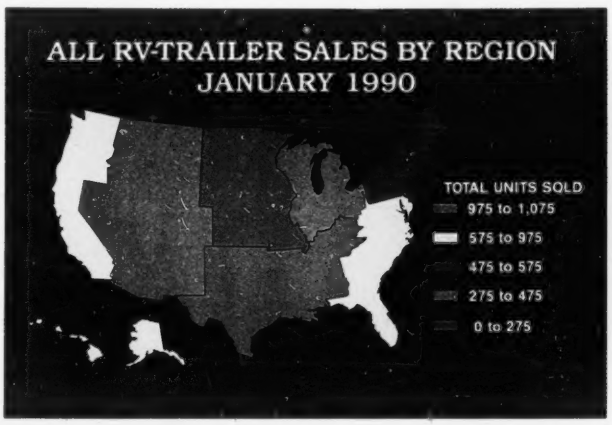
DEPARTMENTS

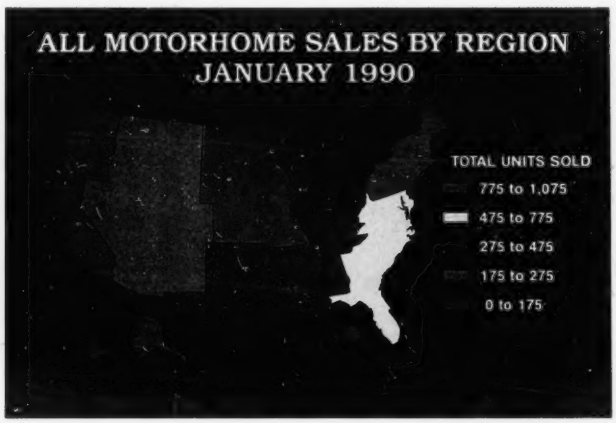
Dealer Concept ____ 40
Marketing ____ 43
Index to Advertisers ____ 43
Legal ____ 44
Calendar ____ 46
In Brief ____ 48
Profitmakers ____ 50
New Literature ____ 51
Classified Advertising ____ 52
Commentary ____ 54

RV Business (ISSN 0744-9569, USPS 920-340) is copyrighted 1990 by TL Enterprises Inc. in the United States, Canada, Great Britain and other countries. All rights reserved. Permission to reprint or quote excerpts granted only upon written request. Second-class postage paid at Agoura, Calif. 91301, and additional entry points. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *RV Business*, PO Box 17126, North Hollywood, Calif. 91615-7126. Address all correspondence and editorial material to the Agoura, Calif., office. *RV Business* is published semimonthly. Subscription rates: U.S. and Canada, $48 a year; $96 for two years. Foreign subscriptions, $96 a year. Single copies are $2 for regular issues and $9.95 for the directory issue. Advertising rates are provided on request. *RV Business* is published by TL Enterprises Inc., 29901 Agoura Road, Agoura, Calif. 91301, which also publishes *Trailer Life*, *MotorHome*, *Rider*, *Trailer Life's Annual RV Buyer's Guide*, *Trailer Life's Campground & RV Services Directory* and *Highways* for the Good Sam Club. TLE's Book Division currently has 10 books in print.

JANUARY RETAIL SALES DISAPPOINTED INDUSTRY

THOMAS WALWORTH





East North Central: Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin; **Mountain**: Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, Wyoming; **Northeast**: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont; **Pacific**: Alaska, California, Oregon, Washington, Hawaii; **South Atlantic**: Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia; **West North Central**: Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota; **South Central**: Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama.

Starting out in 1990, the RV industry faces a new problem in trying to analyze market movements.

Statisticians are being hampered in their efforts to gather complete retail data by a new law passed by the state of California, which restricts access to vehicle-registration information.

There is a great deal of lobbying activity aimed at reversing or modifying that California law, but, until the issue is resolved, we will be using last year's registration figures from California, adjusted for current market conditions.

Based on that adjusted data, the national RV-trailer market was down 10.33% in January compared with January of last year. Meanwhile, the national motorhome market was down 5.44% for the month when compared with January 1989.

Figure 1 ranks the seven regions of the country in terms of their percentage changes in RV-trailer sales in January 1990 compared with the same month in 1989.

The South Central region led all other regions in growth of trailer sales. In that region, Alabama had the largest percentage gain over the previous January. Meanwhile, the East North Central region trailed the pack, with Illinois recording the largest decline for the month.

RV TRAILERS, JAN. '90

Jan. '89 Rank	Region	% of Change From Jan. '89	Dec. '89 Rank
1	S. Central	13.5	1
2	S. Atlantic	5.2	4
3	Pacific	– 9.1	5
4	Mountain	–16.9	3
5	Northeast	–20.5	7
6	W.N. Central	–35.4	2
7	E.N. Central	–38.8	6

Figure 1

The January decline in the retail market created great concern.

MOTORHOMES, JAN. '90

Jan. '89 Rank	Region	% of Change From Jan. '89	Dec. '89 Rank
1	S. Atlantic	15.8	4
2	S. Central	10.4	1
3	Mountain	4.0	7
4	Pacific	0.8	2
5	W.N. Central	–10.2	3
6	Northeast	–26.3	6
7	E.N. Central	–36.9	5

Figure 2

In Figure 2, a regional ranking based on the percentage change in motorhome sales from January 1989 to January 1990 shows that the South Atlantic region achieved the No. 1 spot. In that region, West Virginia had the largest gain over January '89.

The East North Central region again reported the largest market decline based on a comparison with sales for January a year earlier. And Illinois again came in with the biggest percentage decline among the East North Central states.

The January 1990 decline in the retail market created great concern in the RV industry, which had expected the sales surge that started in late 1989 to continue.

But there were some bright spots in the early 1990 numbers. In particular, there were signs of revival in the South Atlantic and South Central markets. Retail figures in Texas, Florida, Alabama and Virginia all showed improvement.

Still, it looks as if the 1990 market will be a challenge for the RV industry. Δ

Thomas Walworth is general manager of Statistical Surveys Inc., Grand Rapids, Mich., which has reported retail statistics for 30 years to the RV industry. Statistical Surveys is an acknowledged leader in the RV statistical field.

GRAPHICS: CUSTOM COLOR VISUALS

FEBRUARY FIZZLES AS CONVERSIONS FALL FLAT

MORTON MARCUS

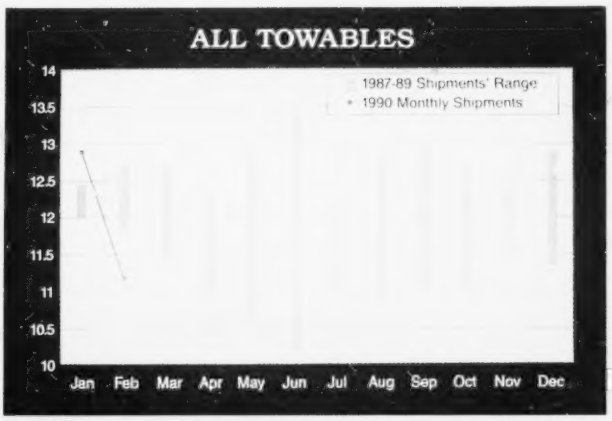


Figure 1

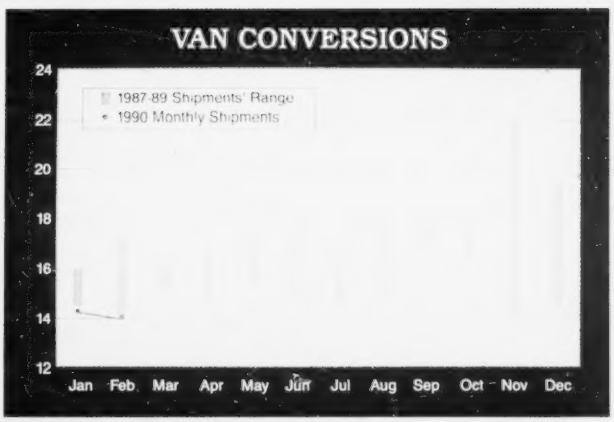


Figure 2

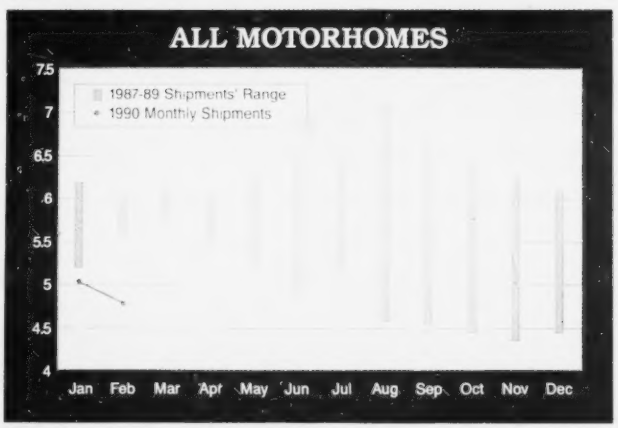


Figure 3

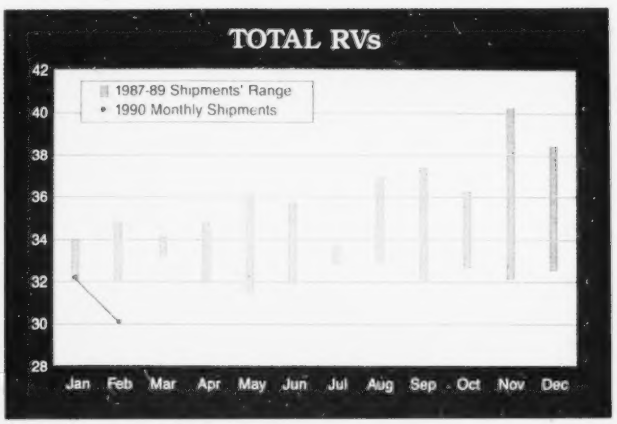


Figure 4

Even given the apparently dreary evidence of February, shipments actually were doing better in some instances than our most recent forecast.

"Feb Fizzles; Forecast Flash" would be the headline of this column if *RV Business* used the style manual of *Variety*. Such a colorful presentation of information is common in show business and needed in the RV industry given the apparently dreary evidence of February shipments. But note the use of the word "apparently." As discussed below, shipments actually were doing better in some instances than our most recent forecast.

Total RV shipments in February, as reported by RVIA and adjusted for normal seasonal patterns, were down in most comparisons. At 30,140, total units shipped were off nearly 4,700 units (13.5%) from the same month in 1989. The last time any single month came in as low as February was back in early 1986 or late 1985. Total shipments and shipments for each major sector also fell outside the range for February as defined by the experience of 1987-1989. *(See Figures 1 through 4).*

In sum, February shipments were down by nearly 2,100 units (6.4%) from January, and shipments were running almost 6,400 units (9.3%) behind the year-to-date figures for 1989. *(See Figure 6.)*

Towables were down by just 5% from February 1989, while motorhome shipments were off by 17% from the same month a year ago but higher than in any of the last four months of 1989. Van

GRAPHICS: CUSTOM COLOR VISUALS

conversions, down by 18% from 1989 February, had not been so low since late 1987.

Motorhomes and van conversions both got off to a slow start in 1990. Towables, by comparison, were looking good. Travel trailers gained 2.6 market-share points, and folding-camping trailers added another 1.0 point. *(See Figure 5.)*

As of February, towables were 160 units ahead of the first two months of 1989. Conventional travel trailers comprised almost all of that gain after netting out fiver advances and park-model losses.

Motorhomes, for the first two months of 1990, were running 16%, or nearly 1,900 units, behind the pace of 1989. Class C minimotorhomes and Class As led this slide. And, for the third consecutive month, van conversions were down. Thus far in 1990, there were nearly 4,700 fewer conversions (14%) shipped than in '89.

Results from the first two months of 1990 suggest that the industry will not meet the moderate growth earlier forecast. The quarter will end with shipments of 93,500 units, which is about 9.5% below our forecast in the March 23 issue of RVB. A closer look, however, indicates that both towables and motorhomes were doing better than predicted. Our forecast set first-quarter shipments of towables at 34,200; as of February, the industry was heading for 36,100 units, or 5.5% higher than expected. Motorhomes were projected to hit 13,500 in the first quarter, but the industry was operating at a 14,700-unit pace, or nearly 9% ahead of the forecast.

PERCENT MARKET SHARE BY TYPE OF UNIT
(Year-to-date, adjusted for seasonal variation)

	1990	1989	Change
TOTAL RVs	100.00	100.00	0.00
Travel Trailers:	25.62	23.03	2.59
Conventional	14.99	13.40	1.59
Park Models	1.83	1.95	−0.11
Fifth-wheels	8.79	7.68	1.12
Folding Camping Trailers	10.21	9.23	0.97
Truck Campers	2.79	2.53	0.26
TOTAL TOWABLES	38.61	34.79	3.82
Motorhomes:			
Class A	8.76	9.65	0.89
Class B Van Campers	1.47	1.15	0.32
Class C:	5.54	6.24	−0.70
Minis	4.07	5.29	−1.22
Low Profiles	0.35	0.43	−0.08
Micro-minis	1.12	0.52	0.60
TOTAL MOTORHOMES	21.32	23.28	−1.97
Multiuse Van Conversions	45.61	48.16	−2.55

Percentages may not add to total because of rounding.

Figure 5

The single segment bringing down the industry was van conversions. By February, van conversions were being shipped at a rate of 42,600 units for the quarter, 23% off the 55,400-unit pace anticipated.

With the first quarter ahead of schedule, it is possible that our revised 1990 forecast will be even stronger than the 4.6% increase anticipated. Δ

Morton J. Marcus is the director of the Indiana Business Research Center at Indiana University School of Business, where he is also a member of the faculty. Marcus specializes in using statistics to identify economic trends.

RV SHIPMENTS BY TYPE OF UNIT
(Adjusted for seasonal variation)

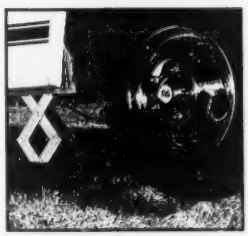
Type of Units	Feb '90	Change From Jan '90 Number	%	Year-to-Date 1990	1989	Change Number	%
TOTAL RVs	30,140	- 2,070	- 6.4	62,340	68,720	- 6,380	- 9.3
Travel Trailers	7,710	- 550	- 6.7	15,970	15,830	140	0.9
Conventional	4,420	- 520	- 10.5	9,350	9,210	130	1.4
Park Models	600	60	10.3	1,140	1,340	- 200	- 14.6
Fifth-wheels	2,690	- 100	- 3.4	5,480	5,280	210	3.9
Folding Camping Trailers	2,620	- 1,130	- 30.2	6,360	6,350	20	0.3
Truck Campers	870	0	0.5	1,740	1,740	0	0.0
TOTAL TOWABLES	11,190	- 1,680	- 13.1	24,070	23,910	160	0.7
Motorhomes:							
Class A	2,670	- 120	- 4.4	5,460	6,630	- 1,170	- 17.7
Class B Van Campers	430	- 50	- 9.5	910	790	120	15.6
Class C	1,690	- 80	- 4.4	3,460	4,290	- 830	- 19.4
-Minis	1,280	30	2.3	2,540	3,630	- 1,100	- 30.2
-Low Profiles	80	- 70	- 46.7	220	300	- 80	- 25.7
-Micro-minis	330	- 40	- 10.9	700	360	340	95.3
TOTAL MOTORHOMES	4,790	- 250	- 4.9	9,830	11,710	- 1,880	- 16.0
Multiuse Van Conversions	14,150	- 140	- 1.0	28,430	33,100	- 4,660	- 14.1

Note: Data rounded to nearest 10 units.

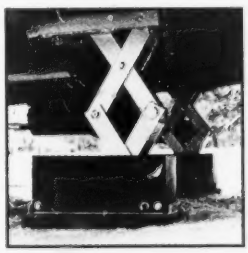
Figure 6

THE SUPERIOR

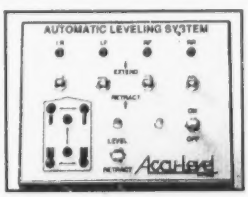
Accu-Level Motorhome Leveling, Stabilizing System...



- ☐ Two-way hydraulic cylinders with proven scissors-type jack construction...power up, power down.
- ☐ Pressure-free hydraulic lines once system is leveled...won't sag, settle or bleed off over long periods of time.



- ☐ Large 16" by 9½" foot pads eliminate the need to put plates or planks down before leveling on soft ground.
- ☐ Positive leveling and stabilizing both from side to side and front to back.



- ☐ Ultra-compact control panel (3¾"×4¾") mounts into the dash, is completely electric and easy to operate.
- ☐ System uses three level sensors... eliminates the possibility of frame twist.

"Designed And Built With You In Mind"

Contact your dealer or Accu-Level for complete information

Accu-Level HYDRAULIC LEVELERS

413 Linnerud Drive, Sun Prairie, Wisconsin 53590
(608) 825-3835 or (608) UB-LEVEL

FEATURE

FOLD-DOWNS SEEK 1990 REBOUND

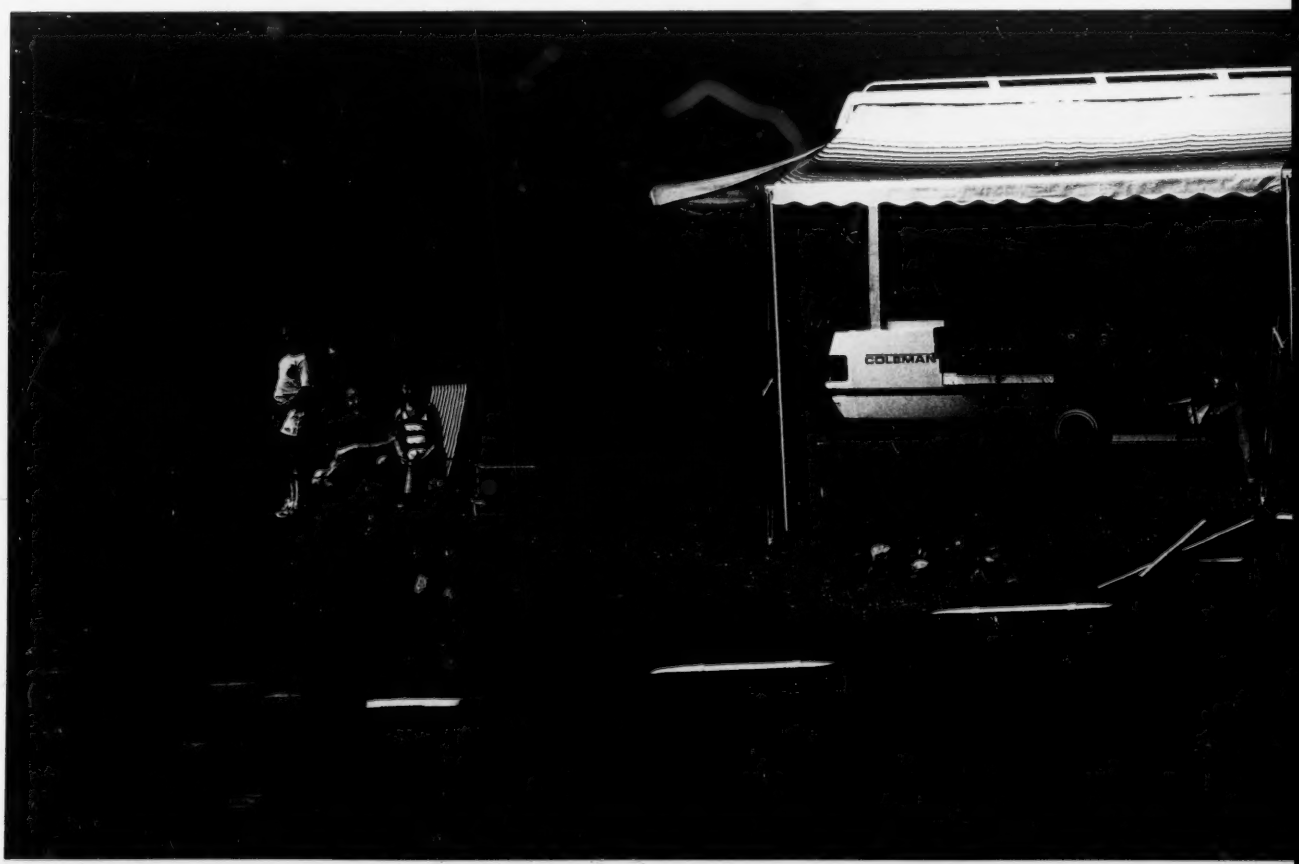
1990 may prove a turning point for sales and the first test of newcomer Fleetwood.

VICKIE ELMER

Jim Sheldon, director of marketing for Fleetwood Enterprises Inc.'s RV Group, has a story he enjoys telling when asked about the Riverside, Calif., firm's hopes for its new folding-camping trailer business, acquired last year from The Coleman Company Inc.

Picture this scene, Sheldon says: A couple driving a high-end foreign car pulls in to an RV dealership. They lug a baby and a toddler out of the car and start to look around the lot. Soon their choice becomes obvious. They want a fold-down. Clearly, they could have afforded something much plusher or pricier, but they explain to the salesman that they want their kids to experience camping on a basic level, much as they did as children camping in tents.

Now, Sheldon suggests with relish, imagine this tableau occurring hundreds or even thousands of times a year at dealerships throughout the country. That's what Fleetwood is betting will happen this year and in the years ahead. Thousands of Yuppies will hitch folding trailers to their Volvos, Broncos and Saabs, predicts Sheldon. And, having acquired Coleman's 30%



market share along with its manufacturing plant and dealer network, Fleetwood will be there to serve them.

Signs of a Rebound

Are there any signs that Sheldon's hopes are not just a pipedream? Through March of this year, shipments of Coleman fold-downs from the Somerset, Pa.-based Fleetwood Folding Trailers operation increased 20% over last year, according to Larry Marsh, director of sales for Fleetwood Folding Trailers. "It's very encouraging for us," Marsh sums up.

After a dismal performance in 1989, other manufacturers also expressed hopes of attaining similarly healthy, if not huge, sales growth in the months ahead.

For example, Starcraft Corp., Goshen, Ind., the No. 3 tent-camper manufacturer, expects a 5% to 10% sales increase in 1990. Starcraft Chairman Don Cuzzocrea argues that dealers have room in their inventories to buy now and that early signs indicate that they will be ordering more fold-downs.

Middlebury, Ind.-based Jayco Inc., the nation's second largest folding-trailer maker, is also planning for a long-term sales climb. The company moved its pop-up camper operations to a larger plant in December of last year, increasing capacity by 20%, notes Chuck McKinney, Jayco national sales manager. The expansion reflects the level of optimism Jayco has in the fold-down market, McKinney says.

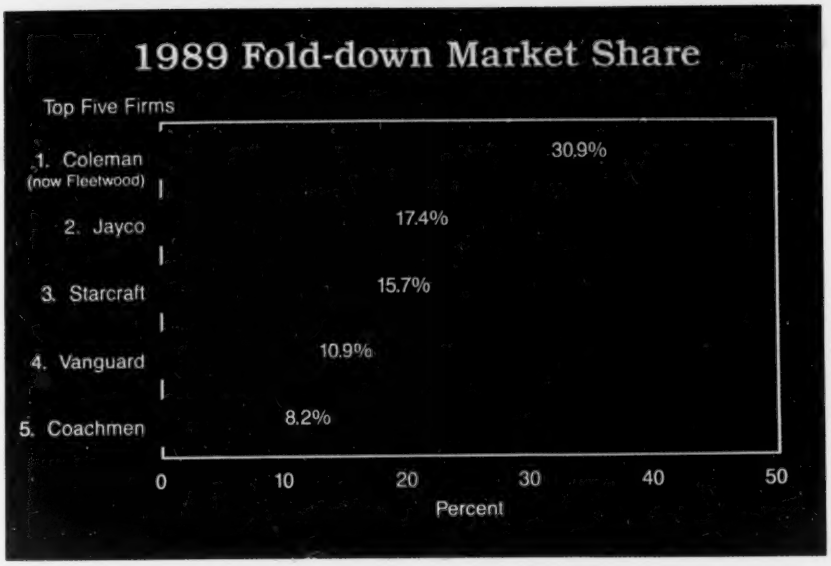


CHART: CUSTOM COLOR VISUALS

The top-five fold-down makers and their retail-market shares are shown in the chart above. Actual market-share figures were unavailable for other manufacturers, but other top-10 fold-down makers – listed in order of their unit-sales ranking – were Rockwood Inc., Goshen, Ind., No.6; Skamper Corp., Bristol, Ind., No. 7; Van American-Cobra Inc., Goshen, Ind., No. 8; and Sun-Lite Inc., Bristol, Ind., No. 9. Data is courtesy of Statistical Surveys Inc., Grand Rapids, Mich.

Fleetwood hopes to use units like the 1990 Coleman Sequoia unit (below) to entice first-time buyers who can later be moved up into a Fleetwood travel trailer or motorhome.

The statisticians generally back up manufacturers hopes. In his latest forecast, John DeWolf, economic consultant to the Reston, Va.-based Recreation Vehicle Industry Association (RVIA), predicted that folding-camper shipments would increase 5% this year to 35,600 units, up from 33,900 units shipped in 1989. That increase will not recover ground lost by the almost 20% drop in 1989 from 1988, however. But DeWolf sees the upward trend strengthening, with another 12.4% gain for fold-down shipments in 1991, raising the annual tally to 40,000 units. To put that figure into perspective, 40,000 shipments will outstrip the average of 36,240 units shipped annually in the 1980s. Of course, the 1991 level will still fall short of the tent camper's heyday, when sales peaked at 97,700 units in 1973.

Similarly, Morton Marcus, economic analyst with the Center for Econometric Model research at Indiana University and a regular contributor to *RV Business*, predicted in his most recent forecast in RVB's March 23 issue that folding-camping trailer shipments would rebound by 5.8% in 1990 after their 18.9% drop in 1989.

Early indicators on the direction of fold-downs have been mixed, however. In January, fold-down shipments to dealers increased 13.3% over January of 1989, a stronger showing than for any other type of RV except the small Class B van-camper niche market, according to RVIA's statistics. In February, however, RVIA shipment figures showed that camping trailers slipped back by 13.8% compared with February of last year. The cumulative effect was to leave fold-down shipments at the same level they had attained after the first two months of last year.

A Close Watch on Fleetwood

Industry observers agree, the biggest change in the business this year is Fleetwood's entry into the marketplace after its December 1989 purchase of Coleman's folding-trailer division in Pennsylvania. Manufacturers and dealers alike are waiting to see what the RV giant is planning for Coleman, the fold-down market leader with more than 30% of national sales.

At this point, Sheldon and Marsh are willing to give only a few clues about those directions. Fleetwood will keep Coleman as a one-brand, one-plant operation, Sheldon confirms. And Fleetwood, which acquired use of the Coleman name for five years, will market its fold-down units with a "by Fleetwood" signature beginning in the 1991-model year.

As to a completely new name for Fleetwood's pop-up camper line, Elden Smith, senior vice president of Fleetwood's RV Group, says the company already is thinking about names and may even try out some ideas on its dealers this summer. But it will be at least a year before the new

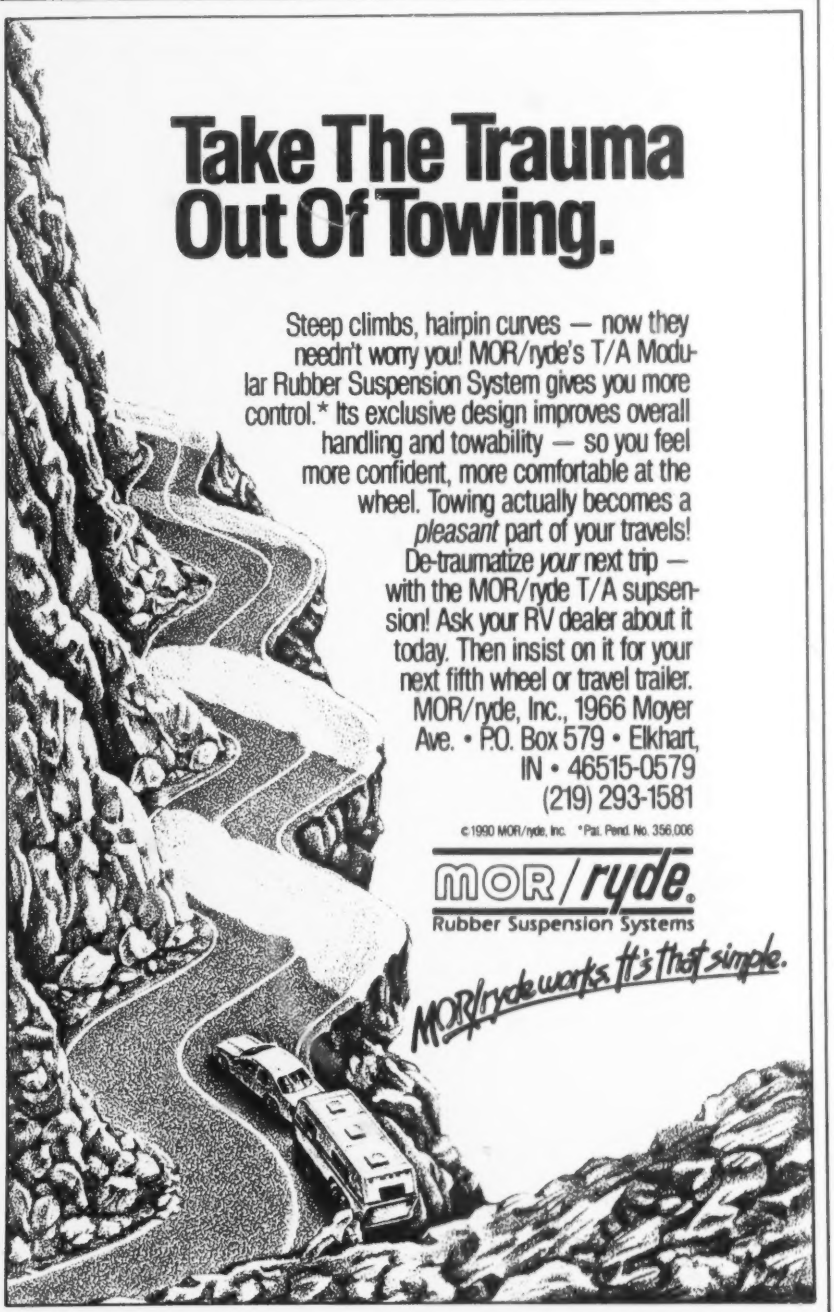
brand debuts, he adds, and then only in conjunction with the familiar Coleman moniker.

Fleetwood also hopes to position its folding trailers as entry-level products that will build trade-up sales for its travel trailers, fifth-wheels and motorhomes, according to Marsh. He admits that first-time buyers often start with a used trailer or motorhome before stepping into a new one of the same type, but he argues that, with the right products and incentives, Fleetwood can to change that pattern.

Finally, Fleetwood is seeking to guard and expand its market dominance by filling in Coleman's dealer network in areas where there are currently no Coleman dealers. It has sent letters to Fleetwood dealers asking them to respond if they are interested in carrying fold-downs and already has signed on a number of dealers, including one in Anchorage, Alaska. But most of the target locations are in secondary markets, with the largest number, about 10 locations, in the South.

How do Fleetwood's folding-trailer competitors feel about all this?

Gary Wyatt, vice president of marketing for Skamper Corp., Bristol, Ind., says he sees some positive results from Fleetwood's entry into the fold-down market because of its long-term commitment to the RV industry. As a public company, Fleetwood has shareholders to whom it must answer, so it will be less likely to slash prices and cut margins than some others, he points out. But he questions how Fleetwood will deal with the eventual loss of the famous Coleman name without also losing some business.


Take The Trauma Out Of Towing.
Steep climbs, hairpin curves — now they needn't worry you! MOR/ryde's T/A Modular Rubber Suspension System gives you more control.* Its exclusive design improves overall handling and towability — so you feel more confident, more comfortable at the wheel. Towing actually becomes a *pleasant* part of your travels! De-traumatize *your* next trip — with the MOR/ryde T/A supsension! Ask your RV dealer about it today. Then insist on it for your next fifth wheel or travel trailer. MOR/ryde, Inc., 1966 Moyer Ave. • P.O. Box 579 • Elkhart, IN • 46515-0579 (219) 293-1581
©1990 MOR/ryde, Inc. *Pat. Pend. No. 356,006
MOR/ryde
Rubber Suspension Systems
MOR/ryde works. It's that simple.

Will Low-Line Units Dominate?

In last year's scramble to shore up sliding sales, many manufacturers introduced lower-priced units to entice more first-time buyers—similar to the trend toward low-priced travel trailers of the last 18 months. For example, about 75% of Jayco's camping-trailer sales are now concentrated in its economy J series, a basic unit that retails for $3,000 to $3,800, according to McKinney.

Skamper joins other manufacturers in predicting a move this year to more "comfort and convenience features—more bells and whistles."

But Wyatt at Skamper joins other manufacturers in predicting a move this year to more "comfort and convenience features—more bells and whistles." Among the added amenities in 1990, according to manufacturers, will be hot-water showers, toilets, queen-size beds and air conditioners.

The target buyers themselves are likely to put a cap on a shift to higher-priced camping trailers. Marsh at Fleetwood says that surveys show the typical folding-trailer buyer is between 25-47 years old, married with 1.7 children and living in the suburbs on a family income of around $37,000 a year. These relatively young buyers also may have high expenses—a mortgage or children in college—so they either don't want or cannot afford the higher-priced recreational vehicles, he says. In addition, Marsh notes that the new federal-tax laws have wiped out interest-expense writeoffs and eliminated many families' income-tax refunds, which often were used in buying a camper.

Some Geographic Shifts

In 1990, determining where the target buyer lives may be an equally important factor in judging the market. All manufac-

Distinctly Different . . .

Kountry Star

Quality is #1 at Newmar Corporation, and our "Personal Touch" inspection of all products will insure you of that high quality before any RV ever leaves our plant!

BY Newmar Corp.

Newmar Kountry Klub *Check It Out!*

Newmar Corporation, P.O. Box 30
Nappanee, IN 46550-0030, (219) 773-7791

Here are 20 Good Reasons for Stocking All of Sun's Popular Profit Makers:

20 quality products that turn over fast and bring your customers back for more!

Call your favorite RV Distributor today. You have 20 Good Reasons!

SUN

14025 West 68th Avenue
Arvada, CO 80004 U.S.A.
Toll Free: 800-441-0132
Fax: 303-467-1104

FOLD-DOWNS *continued*

turers report that they are dealing with huge regional swings in fold-down sales.

The northeastern United States—and New England in particular—has long been a stronghold for folding-camper sales. But, in the last year, the Northeastern economy has stumbled because of troubles with computer companies, real estate prices and banking. Fold-down sales in the region have slowed markedly.

The northeastern United States—and New England in particular—has long been a stronghold for folding-camper sales. But, in the last year, the Northeastern economy has stumbled.

In compensation for the slump in that traditional market, many manufacturers are reporting that the Southeastern states look promising, with the Carolinas and Virginia likely to see good growth in sales. Texas and the oil states also have the potential for some increased activity, according to Skamper's Wyatt. And the Midwest—including Michigan, Illinois, Ohio and Indiana—"is coming on a little bit stronger," Fleetwood's Marsh reports.

Beyond the regional ups and downs of 1990 and 1991, however, manufacturers generally agree on the market's good long-term prospects. They point to the trend toward smaller cars that lack the towing power for a larger RV and to how easily a fold-down can be stored (in a garage or tucked away in a corner of the backyard), which appeals to increasingly congested suburban and urban lifestyles. In addition, they note, campers are more versatile when it comes to end destinations: They are easy to park and set up, and they require fewer hook-ups. Fold-downs are as at home in the wilderness as in a luxury resort-campground.

Jayco and Fleetwood officials even see some indications that older couples will join Yuppies in returning to folding trailers. "They want to recapture some of the fun they had" camping 20 years ago, Fleetwood's Marsh says. Of course, the unspoken hope is that, if the demographics are expanding, fold-down makers will get to recapture some of their sales levels of 20 years ago, too. Δ